अन्तरा जी-15 सहयोग तथा इन मसलों पर जी-15 जी-8 वार्ता शुरू करने की प्रत्याशा शामिल हैं। ऐसी सभी प्राथमिकताओं को नौवें शिखर सम्मेलन के अन्त में जारी संयुक्त वक्तव्य में दर्शाया गया है। सार्वभौमिकीकरण तथा आर्थिक उदारीकरण और चालू वित्तीय संकट से उत्पन्न चुनौतियों का सामना करने के लिए सभी सदस्य इन मसलों पर विचारों के अभिसरण को संवर्धित करने पर सहमत थे। उन्होंने आतंकवाद की चुनौती का सामना करने के लिए क्षेत्रीय और अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सहयोग संवर्धन का आह्वान किया।

पाकिस्तान:— पाकिस्तान की यात्रा के दौरान दोनों प्रधान मंत्रियों ने लाहौर घोषणा पर हस्ताक्षर किए। यह दोनों देशों की शांति और सुरक्षा के लिए ऐतिहासिक कदम है। विदेश सचिवों, ने समझौता ज्ञापन पर हस्ताक्षण किए, जिसके अनुसार भारत और पाकिस्तान विश्वासोत्पादक उपाय करने के लिए एक करार करने हेतु कार्य करेंगे। एक संयुक्त विज्ञप्ति जारी की गई जिसमें सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी जैसे सहयोग के नए और महत्वपूर्ण क्षेत्रों का पता लगाया गया तथा मानवीय मसलों को मंत्रीस्तर पर हल करने का निर्णय लिया गया। यह निर्णय लिया गया कि दोनों देशों के विदेश मंत्री परस्पर हित के सभी मसलों पर बातचीत करने के लिए समय-समय पर बैठक करेंगे। पाकिस्तान की सरकार और जनता के साथ शांति और मैत्री एवं दोनों देशों की जनता के लाभ के लिए सहयोग का व्यापक ढांचा तैयार करने की भारत की इच्छा उच्चतम स्तर पर व्यक्त की गई। सरकार आशा करती है कि प्रधान मंत्री के ऐतिहासिक कदम से तथा उनके इस पुनः कथन से "कि सुरक्षित, स्थायी एवं समृद्ध पाकिस्तान भारत के हित में है," हमारे द्विपक्षीय संबंधों में नया उध्याय जुड़ेगा।

(ख) विदेश मंत्री ने फ्रांस की यात्रा नहीं की।

(ग) प्रश्न नहीं उठता।

Acceptance of LoC as International Border

1750. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under consideration of Government to accept the Line of Control in J&K as International Line in search of a permanent solution of Kashmir issue; and

(b) if yes, the need and justification thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Denial of Permission to US Scientists

1751. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state whether Government have taken any stand or action on the denial of permission to US scientists from attending Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) physics seminar in India?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): GOI position is that coercive and unilateral measures, whether in the economic or technology field, are counter-productive. We do not agree with any targeted policy of denying permission to scientists which comes in the way of scientific exchange and interaction. Such measures are against the accepted practices of free movement of scientific personnel and collaboration on scientific research and development. All such cases are taken up with US Government.

Relations with Neighbouring Countries

1752. SHRI ONKAR SINGH LAKHAWAT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken initiatives to improve and strengthen relations with neighbouring countries; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) The Government have taken a number of initiatives to improve and strengthen relations with neighbouring countris, as detailed below:

Pakistan: Government are desirous of building a relationship of peace, friendship and cooperation with Pakistan. During 1998, Government took the initiative to begin a composite dialogue process with Pakistan, which seeks to build trust and confidence, promote mutually beneficial cooperation and address outstanding issues. The first round of the composite dialogue process took place in October-November 1998. Some progress was achieved in some of the under discussion areas and the next round of the composite dialogue process is likely to be held soon.

The Prime Minister took a historic initiative by visiting pakistan on February 20-21, 1999. During his visit, the Prime Minister conveyed to the Government and people of Pakistan India's deep desire for peace and friendship with them and to develop a comprehensive structure of cooperation for the benefit of the two peoples. The Prime Minister and the Pakistan Prime Minister signed the Lahore Declaration, which is a landmark for the peace and security of the two countries. The Foreign Secretaries also signed a Memorandum of Understanding as per which India and Pakistan will work to enter into agreements to put into place far-reaching Confidence Building Measures. A Joint Statement was also issued on this occasion, which identified new and significant areas of cooperation such as information technology, and wherein it was decided to address humanitarian issues at a ministerial level on an urgent basis. It was also decided that the Foreign Ministers of the two countries would meet periodically to discuss all issues of mutual concern. Government expect that the Prime Minister's historic initiative and his reiteration that a secure, stable and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest will mark a new chapter in our bilateral ties.

China: We seek good relations with all our neighbours including China. We believe that the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, jointly enunciated by India and China, are of continuing relevance to the development of our relations. We seek a relationship in which both sides are responsive to each other's concerns. We remain committed to the process of dialogue to resolve outstanding differences and to the development of friendly, cooperative, good neighbourly and mutually beneficial relationship with China.

Foreign Office Consultations between India and China were held in Beijing on February 25-26, 1999. This was the first such consultation under the MoU on Cooperation between the two Foreign Ministries. The talks covered bilateral, regional and international issues. The two sides agreed that the talks enhanced mutial understanding and on continuation of the dialogue at various levels.

Nepal and Bhutan: Government of India have consistently emphasised the importance in strengthening and improving the relations with the neighbouring countries. Relations with Bhutan and Nepal rest on the firm and historical foundations and are supported by close economic and commercial ties. Over the last year, a number of high level contacts have been established with Bhutan and Nepal. President visited Nepal in May 1998 and the King and the Queen of Nepal visited India in January 1999. The King of Bhutan visited India in October 1998. All these visits at the level of Head of State have served to consolidate the goodwill and warmth that characterise relations with Bhutan and Nepal and promoted mutual respect and understanding. On the economic front, the renewal of Transit Treaty with Nepal represents a major development. Cooperation with Bhutan is progressing in timely manner. Minister of Power visited Bhutan in October 1998 to review the present cooperation in hydropower sector and to develop new perspectives.

Afghanistan: India has traditionally enjoyed friendly and cooperative relations with Afghanistan. We are concerned at the continuing civil was in Afghanistan,

which has affected peace and stability of the whole region, and furthering of our friendly ties with Afghanistan. Nevertheless, we have continued to extend humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan both bilaterally and through the UN.

After the devastating earthquake in Afghanistan on May 30, 1998, a planeload of relief material was sent on June 11, 1998. A consignment of 30 tonnes of vegetable oil was sent through the UN in July 1998. A consignment of medical equipment, medical supplies and medicines worth Rs. 40 lakhs was sent to the Indira Gandhi Institute for child Health, Kabul in October 1998. More consignments of medicines, woolens, and food items will be sent in the coming months.

Bangladesh: India has a close, cooperative and friendly relationship with Bangladesh. The level and quality of interaction with Bangladesh has markedly improved after the present Awami League Government took over in 1996. The Government has taken a number of steps to further improve this close relationship. The following high level visits have taken place between India and Bangladesh since April 1998:—

Visits from India:

April 1998	I&B Minister for attending SAARC I&B Ministers' Meeting
June 1998	(i) Minister of Surface Transport for opening of Jamuna Bridge (ii) Foreign Secretary for bilateral talks
August 1998	Chief of Army Staff
November 1998	Home Secretary
December 1998	(i) Commerce Secretary for Trade Review Talks (ii) Chief of Naval Staff

Visits from Bangladesh:

April 1998	Bangladesh Foreign Minister visited as a special envoy of Bangladesh Prime Minister
June 1998	Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
July 1998	Agriculture Minister
December 1998	Chief of Army Staff
January 1999	Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

Apart from such bilateral visits, Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh met for the 10th SAARC Summit in Colombo in July 1998. EAM called on the Bangladesh Prime Minister during her visit to Calcutta on January 27, 1999.

Wide ranging discussions were held in bilateral meetings at all levels during 1998 on issues of concern to both sides, including border management, security, transit facilities. Economic cooperation was discussed in the Trade Review Talks with Bangladesh in December 1998 and development of infrastructure linkages, border trade, Motor Vehicles Agreement, more credit facility to Bangladesh were among the issues taken up in that meeting.

Bilateral discussions on the Motor Vehicles Agreement with Bangladesh were pursued and an Agreement for a Calcutta-Dhaka bus service has been initiated on February 17, 1999. The bus service is expected to start in March 1999.

Foreign Secretary level talks in June 1998 and Home Secretary level talks in November 1998 both in Dhaka have increased our understanding on issues of mutual interest.

Maldives: Indo-Maldives relations continued to remain close and friendly. Maldives is an important maritime neighbour and is a member of SAARC. India has assisted Maldives in its developmental efforts, including in the area of Human Resource Development. A regular interaction between the two countries was kept up through exchange of high level visits. India provided technical training to a large number of Maldivian candidates

in different fields such as medicine, engineering, computer science, nursing and agriculture under its technical assistance and scholarships scheme.

President Gayoom of Maldives hao visited India on June 30-July 1, 1998 in his capacity as Chairman of SAARC. During his visit, President Gayoom called on the President of India and held discussions with the Prime Minister. On the re-election of President Gayoom as President of Maldives for a fifth consecutive term, a high level delegation led by the Vice President of India visited Maldives from November 10—13, 1998 to represent India at the swearing in ceremony of President Gayoom which was held on November 11, 1998. During the Vice President's call on President Gayoom, bilateral relations were reviewed ad ways and means of strengthening cooperation within SAARC were discussed. Vice President's visit for the inauguration was appreciated by President Gayoom.

Major General Abdul Sattar Anberee, Minister of State for Defence and National Security of Maldives visited India from January 24-30, 1999 at the invitation of Raksha Mantri. During his stay, General Anbaree called on Raksha Mantri, External Affairs Minister and the Home Minister. He also visited some military training establishments.

Myanmar: India and Myanmar have stable and cooperative relationship. In recent years, several steps have been taken to strengthen relations between the two countries. An agreement was signed in March 98 extending US $ 10 million GOI line of credit to Myanmar which is to be utilised for procuring Indian industrial and consumer goods and services. An MoU on cooperation in the field of Agriculture and Allied Sectors was signed in April 1998 during the visit of MOS (Agriculture) to Yangon. As a follow-up to this MoU, a work plan for 1999-2000 was finalised during the visit of Myanmar Agriculture Minister to India in August 1998. Ways and means of enhancing trade and economic linkages with Myanmar were discussed at length during the visit of an inter-ministerial delegation led by Commerce Secretary to Myanmar in October 1998. Foreign Secretary visited Myanmar from February 25—28 when both sides reviewed progress in the development of bilateral relations.

Sri Lanka: In the recent past, the Government of India has sustained the traditional high-level political contacts with the Government of Sri Lanka. The President of Sri Lanka visited India from December 27—30, 1998. This was her fourth visit to India since she took over as the President of Sri Lanka.

A Free Trade Agreement was signed between India and Sri Lanka during the Sri Lankan President's visit, which is expected to lead to the steady expansion of bilateral trade and investment through the graduated reduction of tariffs. India will phase out tariffs on Sri Lankan goods in three years; Sri Lanka will take eight years to remove tariffs on India goods.

Also signed during the visit was an MoU regarding the setting up of the India-Sri Lanka Foundation, which would work towards promoting bilateral exchanges in the field of art, culture, trade, commerce and science & technology.

The President's visit was preceded by the Fourth Session of the India-Sri Lanka Joint Commission, which discussed in detail a wide range of issues.

The Third Session of the India-Sri Lanka Sub-Commission on Science and Technology held from October 27—28, 1998 agreed to diversify cooperation in various fields like biotechnology, ocean development, energy management, information technology, fisheries, earth and atmospheric studies, agriculture, as well as development and transfer of technology to the small and medium sector.

During the Fourth Session of the Sub-Commission on Social, Cultural and Educational matters held at New Delhi from December 14-15, 1998, the Government of India identified several new areas for

cooperation, including India's assistance for development of curriculum for technical institutions in Sri Lanka and for devising a school assessment system, joint production of films, dramas and television software. A draft Cultural Exchange Programme, valid for next three years, was also discussed.

China's view about minimum nuclear deterrence for India

1753. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item captioned "China against minimum N-deterrence for India" as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 28th January, 1999;

(b) if so, whether China has opposed any deal to allow India to have minimum nuclear deterrence in return for joining CTBT; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Government on such opposition made by China?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) (a) and (b) Yes Sir. Government has seen press reports cited above.

(c) Government did not subscribe to the UN Security Council Resolution 1172, which therefore, cannot provide a basis for our ongoing dialogue with key interlocutors. We are currently engaged in these dialogues on the basis of a set of proposals made by India which clearly envisage, inter alia, the maintenance by India of a minimum credible nuclear deterrent.

Visit to South Korea

1754. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Minister of External has visited South Korea recently; and

(b) if so, the details of achievements made during the visit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Minister of External Affairs has not visited the Republic of Korea (ROK) since he assumed office. However, the Minister of State for External Affairs [MOS (EA)] paid an official visit to ROK from 21 to 24 January 1999. MOS(EA) called on the Prime Minister of ROK and conveyed PM's invitation to the ROK Prime Minister to visit India in February 1999. She also met the Minister of Foreign Affairs & Trade and the Minister of State for Trade of ROK. The discussions focussed on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. MOS(EA) met the members of Korea-India Society and the Korea-India Business Council and held discussions with them on the strengthening of friendship and cooperation between our peoples and countries.

The visit has contributed to strengthening bilateral relations with ROK which is one of India's major economic partners. The Prime Minister of ROK visited India on 10-11 February 1999 in response to PM's invitation.

Permanent Membership of the Security Council

1755. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of progress being made for permanent seat of India in the Security Council;

(b) which countries have supported India for permanent place in Security Council;

(c) which countries have opposed; and

(d) what steps Government are taking for securing permanent place in the Security Council?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) UN Security Council restructuring and expansion is being discussed in the